



Book Club in a Bag

Discussion Questions

“The Snowden Files” by Luke Harding

1. In the past, Snowden was critical of whistleblowers such as WikiLeaks. What changed in Snowden that motivated him to steal and release government information?
2. Snowden firmly believed the public had a right to know about the government’s surveillance practices. In order to leak the government’s information, Snowden committed a crime. Do you think the ends justifies the means?
3. In your opinion, is Snowden a hero or a traitor?
4. When Snowden worked at the CIA, his superiors noted his was unreliable. However, he was hired at the NSA without his personnel file being shared. Ironically, the government appears to value upholding employee privacy while spying on the world. Discuss your impressions of this dichotomy.
5. Snowden stole government information using relatively low-tech methods. How and why do you think this was possible?
6. Do you think Harding’s writing style following standard conventions of political thrillers distracts or enhances his message?
7. Do you believe there are any circumstances that would justify the government invading personal privacy? If so, to what degree, do you think the government should be empowered to infringe on people’s rights to privacy?
8. Harding criticizes Snowden for condemning the government for their actions, and then ultimately, fleeing to Russia. Harding describes Snowden as becoming Russia’s prisoner. Do you agree with Harding’s criticism?
9. Despite this book being titled “The Snowden Files: the inside story of the world’s most wanted man”, it is believed that Harding did not interview Snowden, but relied on his own research to compose this biography. In your opinion, does this affect the reliability of the facts presented in the novel?

These questions were created by Clarington Public Library staff to enhance your discussion of the book.

Book Club in a Bag

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